GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:183
ANSWERED ON:22.11.2006
ILL -EFFECTS OF TABACCO
Mohite Shri Subodh;Pallani Shamy Shri K.C .

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of the ill-effects of chewing of gutka, tobacco and pan masala;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has any proposal to bring these items under the stringent food norms;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) the time by which the said proposal is likely to be implemented; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS)

(a) & (b) : The consumption of tobacco has been established to be a major public health hazard. Due to its intake, several persons suffer from mouth, throat and lung cancer, coronary artery and obstructive lung diseases etc., resulting in serious human and social costs. Based on a few community-based surveys in India, it is estimated that 8 lakh deaths could be attributable to tobacco use annually. Besides death, disease and deformities, tobacco use also contributes to unnecessary expenditure. The total economic cost of treating tobacco related diseases was estimated to be more than Rs. 33,800 crores per annum (at 2002 levels).

As per the information available, scientific evidence produced by research institutions concludes that consumption of gutka causes Oral Sub-mucous Fibrosis (OSF) and Oral Cancer. Studies conducted in India indicate that the risk of developing oral cancer is 3-10 times more among tobacco chewers as compared to non users of tobacco.

According to Indian Council of Medical Research, clear cut epidemiological evidence of association of pan masala with oral cancer in human beings is not available. However, studies have been reported on in-vitro genotoxicity as well as experimental induction of cancer in animals, by abstract of arecanut, which is major component in pan masala.

(c) to (f) : The Government has been deeply concerned with the increasing consumption of all tobacco products in the last few years and felt it was necessary to have a comprehensive legislation to control tobacco use. In April 2003, the Parliament passed. "The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003". The Act was notified in the Official Gazette on 19th May, 2003 and came into effect on 1st May,2004. The Act is applicable to the whole of India and cover all types of tobacco products. The important provisions of the Act are as follows :-

(i) Prohibition of smoking in a public place.

(ii) Prohibition of direct and indirect advertisement of tobacco products.

(iii) Prohibition of sale of tobacco products to a person below the age of eighteen years.

(iv) Prohibition of sale of tobacco products near the educational institutions.

(v) Mandatory depiction of statutory warning (including pictorial warnings) on tobacco packs.

(vi) Mandatory depiction of tar and nicotine contents alongwith maximum permissible limits on tobacco packs.

The standards of pan masala have further been prescribed under item A.30 of PFA Rules, 1955. The Rules also provide that every package of pan masala and advertisement shall carry the warning.

"Chewing of Pan Masala may be injurious to health" Gutka at present is marketed as a proprietary food product. As per the provision of the PFA Rules, 1955 amended vide notification GSR 491 (E) dated 21.8.2006, tobacco shall not be used as an ingredient in the manufacture of proprietary food products. This provision shall be effective from 20.08.2007.